

# 21. BIOPOLITICAL/UNRESOLVED ISSUES

*“Problems can not be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.”<sup>36</sup>*

In general, USARAK over the years has performed well in both protecting and conserving its natural resources. This has resulted in little public controversy. There are, however, a few unresolved issues that have challenged the Natural Resources Branch for a considerable period of time. Several of these issues are described below.

## 21-1 Spruce Bark Beetle Control

The spruce bark beetle is significantly affecting the forest ecosystem on Fort Richardson. USARAK will employ measures that are affordable and effective in protecting remaining trees, but recognizes that spruce are going to continue to die until the pest either completes its cycle or new control techniques are developed.

An associated issue is the removal of spruce bark beetle killed timber on relatively steep slopes. Recovering this timber would be expensive and would result in damage to the ecosystem. Roads necessary for access would encourage trespass, create safety hazards, and increase erosion problems. The steep slopes are part of the range firing fans, so timber removal would require ranges to be closed, restricting military training. Since timber removal is not practical, the timber will be left standing, benefiting those species that depend upon dead or dying spruce.

## 21-2 Ecosystem Management Partnerships

During 1998–2003, USARAK will make efforts to forge more partnerships with neighbors and organi-

zations interested in managing ecosystems that extend beyond post boundaries. While this Ecosystem Management approach has potential to improve natural resources management, it also has potential to create biopolitical issues.

It will be fairly easy for USARAK to form partnerships with natural resources-based state and federal agencies. These organizations understand the need for such partnerships, and often they are mutually beneficial. The BLM and Chugach State Park are good examples of organizations that are sharing ecosystem management responsibilities.

Some neighbors, however, are private landowners. As many published discussions of ecosystem management point out, the matter of private property rights often conflicts with objectives of managing ecosystems. “Takings” legislation at state and federal levels is indicative of the volatility of this issue.

Other neighbors are urban. Urban priorities are often very different than ecosystem needs. Urban communities, both large and small, are very concerned about trying to secure funding to comply with federal environmental (and other) mandates. Ecosystem management activities that cost urban partners money are likely to be difficult to implement.

The potential for creating biopolitical issues will not stop USARAK from embarking on the Ecosystem Management route. Recognition of and a willingness to deal with such potential conflicts are a part of the process itself.

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<sup>36</sup>Albert Einstein

## 21-3 Urban Wildlife

In November 1997, ADF&G initiated the formation of a civilian/agency task force to review and evaluate community attitudes and desires regarding wildlife, and to develop a comprehensive plan for managing wildlife in the Municipality of Anchorage. This cooperative plan will seek to:

- ▶ minimize conflicts between people and wildlife
- ▶ maintain and enhance the benefits of wildlife in Anchorage

USARAK is and will remain a key member of this task force.

## 21-4 Protection of the Alpine Ecosystem

The alpine ecosystem and wetlands on Fort Richardson are perhaps the most fragile areas on post, but military personnel must learn combat skills in alpine environments. Even though this INRMP includes measures for minimizing damage to this ecosystem, it is recognized that some will occur, and that this damage is more difficult to repair in alpine areas than in many other areas. USARAK is cognizant of the conflict, and although it will minimize damage, it is not able to completely resolve the problem.

## 21-5 Urban Encroachment

Expansion of Anchorage, Eagle River, and to a lesser extent Birchwood along with associated infrastructural needs, continues to pose the greatest threat to the Fort Richardson military mission. To many local developers and politicians, Fort Richardson and Elmendorf AFB represent an impediment to rapid urban expansion. This attitude appears to have gained strength in recent years as new businesses and development in the Anchorage area have diminished the dependence on military money to fuel the local economy. In dealing with the constant barrage of non-military requests for land and/or land use on Fort Richardson, it has been apparent that many of the requesters are either oblivious to the military's needs and requirements or simply disregard them. USARAK must be firm and fair in its evaluation of

actions and requests that in any way impact the use of its lands. It is anticipated that denial of such requests will in some instances be met with political pressure and adversity. The military's need for land to adequately train and carry out its mission along with its responsibility for sound environmental stewardship should remain steadfast and unswerving.

## 21-6 Hunting and Fishing Permit Fees

The Sikes Act has allowed military installations to sell hunting, fishing, and trapping permits since 1960. Almost all military installations with such programs take advantage of this law to obtain funds. This type of revenue has some very desirable features, notably no "year-end" expenditure requirement, exclusive use for installation fish and wildlife management, and exemption from limitations on amounts that can be spent on equipment.

The problem with installing such a program at Fort Richardson is the sales system. It is estimated that \$20,000 could be generated to support post fish and wildlife management programs if an efficient permit sales system could be installed. Regulations prohibit more than 10 percent of revenues to be used to offset sales costs. Therefore, a pre-existing system to sell items is the only feasible way to pay for the cost of selling permits. There is little incentive for organizations other than the Natural Resources Branch to want to sell these permits since at least 90 percent of the revenue must go to natural resource management.

There are other problems associated with implementing a fee-based permit system, such as adverse reactions from users, but these have been resolved elsewhere with little impact after the first year or so. It is certainly in the best interest of USARAK to resolve this issue, especially as Army environmental and Legacy funds decline.

## 21-7 Use of Campbell Lake

Campbell Lake is a 3,200-acre water body at the very southern tip of Fort Richardson. Chugach State Park would like to use this lake for recreational purposes. Though it is not commonly used for military training, it is needed from time to time and there-

fore, it does not qualify as excess land. During 1998–2003, both the park and USARAK will try to work out an arrangement, possibly an MOU, whereby the

park can use this scenic lake during periods when no military training is scheduled.